

Keeping of domestic birds

Keeping birds, like any other animal, has its rewards. Birds can provide eggs, produce fertiliser, control insects and weeds and be great family pets, however owners are required to maintain the birds and their enclosures in a clean and tidy condition to prevent the creation of an insanitary condition.

An insanitary condition is a condition that could be a public health risk or be offensive to community health standards. Where an insanitary condition occurs, or is likely to occur, ACT Health may issue a direction to remove or prevent the condition under the *Public Health Act 1997* and the *Public Health Regulation 2000*.

How to prevent an insanitary condition when keeping birds

- Consider the number of birds, the size of your property and the proximity of the enclosure to neighbouring dwellings to help minimise the impact your birds may have on your neighbours.
- Keep yards and enclosures clean and free from matter that may create offensive odours.
- Clean bird enclosures regularly and ensure that all refuse (droppings, food scraps, etc) is disposed of properly. Floors of bird enclosures underneath roosts or perches should be of an impervious material to assist with cleaning.
- Troughs for drinking water should not cause soggy ground conditions. Drinking nipples where used, should be protected from conditions which may freeze the water source.
- Bird feed should be stored in sealed containers. Only sufficient feed for your birds should be given during the day, to avoid attracting vermin such as rats.
- The interior of any enclosures should be treated with insecticide to minimise insects.
- If you suspect you have vermin nesting in your property take appropriate action or call a pest control operator in to assist.

Salmonella risks from backyard poultry

Poultry, such as chickens, can harbour and shed *Salmonella*, which is infectious to humans, even if the poultry are healthy and clean.

The following is advice for owners of backyard poultry to help avoid transmission of disease:

- When purchasing poultry, it is best to purchase vaccinated birds from a reliable commercial source.

- Always wash your hands with soap and running water as soon as possible after touching poultry, their eggs, their enclosures, or interacting with the birds and their environment. Consider a dedicated pair of shoes to wear when in the poultry enclosure to avoid bringing germs into your home.
- Adults should always supervise children around poultry and ensure they wash their hands afterwards.
- When around poultry do not eat or drink, touch your mouth or snuggle or kiss the birds.
- Do not let poultry inside the house.
- To avoid illness from backyard eggs ensure cracked, damaged or heavily soiled eggs are disposed of.
- Never wash your eggs with water as this makes them porous, allowing bacteria to enter the egg and contaminate it. Lightly soiled eggs can be cleaned with a dry cloth or tissue.
- Store collected eggs in the refrigerator and ensure they are cooked thoroughly before consumption.

Need more information?

For more information on insanitary conditions, please visit health.act.gov.au or contact the Health Protection Service via hps@act.gov.au or (02) 5124 9700.

If you have questions relating to the welfare of birds, you may wish to contact the RSPCA ACT at 12 Kirkpatrick Street, Weston ACT 2611, phone: (02) 6287 8100, www.rspca-act.org.au

To access the legislation, including the *Animal Welfare Act 1992*, please visit legislation.act.gov.au.

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